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WILLIAM BLAKE—MYSTIC.

PART II.

As much as I understand it, Blake's gospel is a purely psychological one. Man is, roughly speaking, constituted of intelligence, affections, instincts, and vital energy ; brain, breast, stomach and bones, let us say, though we are not accustomed to assigning the latter twain a pseudo-anatomical abiding place. If there is something wrong with man, it can only be that he lacks other elements, or that the elements he has do not co-operate harmoniously. Perhaps both diagnoses of his dis-"ease" are right. Blake might put it, that man's four constituent elements work ill together because he lacks a fifth. If he could get this fifth, the other four would so co-operate as to be one—no longer distinguishable. The machine has parts, the organism members. If we have parts, it is because we lack the organizing principle. The organizing principle is the consciousness, (perpetual, normal, serene,) of God. The ideal man does not, according to Blake, think, feel, become aware of unintelligent prompting, bid his body do this or that. He does not distinguish truth, because he knows nought false ; he does not distinguish good because he knows no evil ; he does not distinguish beauty, because he knows no ugliness ; he simply *is* truth, good, beauty ; they are his attributes ; he knows them directly as himself. To "understand" involves contrast, discord. One has to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good *and* of evil, to have a conscious morality, or a conscience. The perfect man has no conscience. He has knowledge of God as his Self ; knowledge of himself as God's. Even between himself and God the distinction is due to his own incomplete development only, to his partial realization as yet of God. When he is perfected, he will not *distinguish* God. The time will have come of which St. Paul writes, when God shall be all in all.¹ He will *be* Him.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

His last properly human word will be a "declaration" not of human dependence or devilish self-dependence, but of a conscious divine identity. Blake, in a word, is a *Mystic*.

The ideal man is given visions of ideals. His intelligence is crystal-clear. It obtrudes none of its substance between the visions and the rest of the man. It does not assert the existence by refracting the light. It is mere transparency. It is self-denying.

The light passes through the crystal mind, focussed. A spot of fierce heat falls on the affections. They burst aflame. It is not their heat, but the fire of the beam that ignites them. They are fuel to it. They do not declare themselves independent, (as the combustible heart does!) nor do they claim, as planets do, the light for their own. They yield themselves entirely.

The flaming affections, kindled by the transmitted ideal, set the instincts to seething. They do not like polar waters persist in icy self identity. They bubble, they steam. The cauldron of their sea-bed and topaz sky becomes too clear for the vaporized waters. They are furious for work. And lo! the steam issues—torrential energy develops in the mechanism of the body that awaits it. Not like the self-assertive flesh of the corpse. It is pliant, obedient. Its resistance is for the sake of completer obedience. Inertia becomes momentum. It works. And lo! the ideal finds expression in glorious looks, gestures, words, deeds, and heaven sees itself mirrored on earth! For the looks, gestures, words, deeds, there is no motive that belongs to the *man*. He is inspired. God looks, gesticulates, speaks, acts through him. He is not "moral"; he has no standard of good, no choice to make. The choice was made long ago. He has no righteousness, for he takes no credit, nor will receive any glory of another;¹ at all events he is "not good" nor will he let himself be called good.² He is "holy"; that is to say he is God! Not he, but God in

¹ John, v 44.

² Matt. xix. 17 and Mark, x. 18.

him, who worketh in him both to will and to do!¹ To God he ascribes the praise if what is miscalled *his* "Light shine"; for it is his, as a lantern might arrogate to itself its luminousness emitted by the flame; and men, who see him "glorify God" and "his father," not him; and by so doing they rejoice *him* greatly, whose blissful business it is to set forth His glory alone!²

Such we might say is the ideal man. Such are not we. Why not? Accepting a "fall," let us give a strict psychological account of it. Understanding the "fall," we shall see our way clear to a "rise." All we shall have to do will be to reverse the process.

Now, if as an evolutionist, the word "fall" vexes your spirit, say instead of it "failure to realize intended perfection"—perfection dreamed of by Nature, and towards which she strives. It is anthropomorphic language I will admit, but if you talk of "affinity" and "energy" you are surely not aware of how much more of that sort of language you could consistently endure if you tried! The plan and the building are very discrepant. What a "fall" when you look, for instance, from the completed architect's cathedral, to the foundations! Yet that "fall" is the beginning of the real "rise"—of the realization, visible above the vast city of New York, of an ideal cathedral!

Now it is exactly with this whole matter that William Blake deals. Only he deals with it not theologically, but poetically and pictorially. All abstracts are concreted by symbolism. Urizen [your and reason(?),] is intelligence; Luvah [love and ah! (?),] is the affectional man; Tharmas³ is the sum of our instincts and our sense-nature;

¹ Phil. v, 13, cf. Eph. iii, 20, *et seq.*

² John xii, 28, and the entire xviith chapter.

³ All sorts of derivations have been suggested by ingenious students. Mythology, biblical nomenclature, Rabbinical lore, Ossian, the Kabbala, Hebrew, Greek and German roots, have been tortured to yield etymologies (*e. g.* ur and eisen, original iron, is suggested, for Urizen. Ur and Thon, original clay, for Urthonia. Messrs. Ellis and Yeats prefer "luv," Hebrew for heart, to "love" in deriving Luvah. As for Tharmas, no one

Urthona (earthen, with sonorous vowel changes?) is the living body or rather the vital energy of that body—that which constructs, preserves, and controls it—the physical soul if one may so speak.

Now if these four elements of man were functioning as they should, according to the previously indicated ideal method, intellect would be sovereign in man as man, and immediately in touch with God, the poetic genius, (as Blake calls Him, meaning to suggest One who makes not, but causes self-making—does not give ideas, but causes men to get them, *i. e.*, inspires¹). The affections would mediate between intelligence and the instinctive sensational soul; and that again between the affections and the physical energy. These relative offices are personified and named. Not the office makes the man, but the man the office. Therefore the true functions are said to have proceeded or emanated from the respective elements, faculties, or souls of man; and are symbolized by four Titanesses, emanations and rightful spouses respectively of the four lords of human nature. Thus Urizen (a state)² is wedded to Ahania (a space); Luvah to Vala; Tharmas to Enion; Urthona to Enitharmon. Here we have, so far, eight personages for a symbolical myth. In terms of them we can state much abstruse psychological doctrine, and never for one minute become unpoetical or unpicturesque. It remains to say that when the man is distraught, the faculties, or souls, and their normal functions are separated, miscoupled, and assume unnatural aspects. If a faculty or soul separates from its emanation

seems to have made a probable guess. To derive the name from another personage, whose conception was most likely subsequent, seems hardly prudent. Enitharmon from (z)enith and harmon(y) is intelligible; but Tharmas "docked" from Enitharmon is hardly perspicuous, nor is "Thammuz" a convincing etymology.

¹ Cf. "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," W. B. Yeats' Edition, pp. 171-2, and the invaluable (for the student) "There is no Natural Religion." I, pp. 229-230—(the first seven "Principles").

² Messrs. Ellis and Yeats' terminology developing a hint of Blake's; the "state," standing for the "soul"; the "space," for its "function" or relative position, so to speak, in the normal man (=the divine man).

or function, they become mutually destructive; the faculty cannot do other work properly, the function cannot be performed properly by another faculty. Adulterous discontent turns into conjugal hatred. Urizen, for instance, becomes a "spectre" and longs for the destruction of Ahania, who is herself no longer an "emanation" but a mere dismal "shadow"—empty; while only in their reunion can either find satisfaction. If the intellect busies itself exclusively with things of sense denying the spiritual, the spiritual aspiration of the man must perish, or be improperly satisfied with emotional nostrums.

Luvah, the affections, when the intellect, Urizen refuses to mediate divine ideals and strives to reduce man to a mechanical system, *i. e.*, to rule affections by prohibitions, instincts by their denial, physical energies by ascetic practices—Luvah becomes rebellious, terrible, maniacal. His new unnatural aspect, due to Urizen's unnatural functioning, constitutes another myth-personage: Orc (=rock, or=cor). He is what the affections become under carnal impulsions and rational repression. Urthona similarly becomes Los(=sol, or sun) when viewed as causing the destruction of systems of thought and conduct illegitimately foisted on man by the materialized intellect. The vital energies constantly break through, and hence acquire a protestant, prophetic character.

Remembering further that none of the faculties or souls could possibly act on the others, and coöperate with them, unless it had affinities with all, every lawful couple, (soul and emanation,) have four sons (elements) with their four daughters (emanations or functions of these sons or elements). This subdivision, or filiation might be carried on indefinitely. Again any number of these "sons and daughters" may be at any moment regarded, from some particular point of view, collectively, and the synthesis personified, and the person newly named. Of such a nature are Urizen's daughters Ona, Elith, and Uvith, according to Messrs. Ellis & Yeats. Mnetha, the ancient mother, is such

a collective personage for all the four souls and their emanations ; Har (Adam) for Urizen and Ahania, Luvah and Vala ; Heva (Eve) for Tharmas and Enion, Urthona and Enitharmon. But into the intricacies of what Messrs. Ellis & Yeats, after the most patient investigation and sympathetic reconstruction, believe to be the genealogical tree of Blake's myth-deities, we cannot now penetrate. Let the interested reader purchase or borrow their voluminous work and study the matter out for himself.

Now, of course, Blake's personages must inhabit a world of some sort. On no little earth of canal and cabbage-field, commercial city and seaside resort, do they live, and move, and have their being. Still, it is an earth much *like* ours. The continents are there at all events. But all is charged with meaning. The sunrise shall speak of Luvah ; and let what happen to Luvah (or Orc) and Vala, the East stands fast as the region of their rightful habitation. The sun at noon, the zenith, the south, towards which the summer sun inclines, are Urizen's in his primal power. If the conscious life begins with the affections, is at full in the inspired intellect, it is last traceable in our instincts and sensations. There we enter through a region of twilight the hemisphere of the unconscious dark. So in the sunset and the West is the home of Tharmas, from England, as point of view, the Oceanic world ; while Urthona possesses midnight, the nadir when the sun is in the zenith, the north towards which the sun, when impotent in winter-time, inclines. It is quite noticeable that the life of inspiration, so like, because of its trance-like remoteness from the world of sense and sentiment, is never viewed by Blake, (as so often in mystical systems), as a "forgetting," a sleep, an unconsciousness, or a death. Only positive terms does Blake employ. To an idealist like him, as to Shelley (on whom his mantle fell from the fire-chariot, all unconscious though Shelley was of the spiritual inheritance), unconsciousness were annihilation ; and it is safer far to speak of an intenser, transcendent consciousness, at the risk of saying what is

meaningless to one's audience, than from excessive zeal for the supersedence of present conditions of soul-life by those compared with which they are as a death, indulge in expressions ambiguous enough to suggest a Nirvana of non-existence as the goal of evolution.

We have suggested before, in passing, that the sun, fire, (light and heat) and the sense of color; air, winds and clouds, and odors; seas, lakes, rivers, wells, and the senses of touch and taste; the solid earth and the sense of hearing, are also respectively assigned as symbolic provinces to Urizen, Luvah, Tharmas, and Urthona as their birthright.

Now, what could not find expression? Vegetation, of course, belongs to Tharmas. The animals are Urthona's particularly those that haunt caves and prowl at night, that burrow under ground and dread the day. The animals that love green meadows and full sunshine, are on the limits, so to say, of Urthona's animal kingdom towards Tharmas' realm. But Tharmas, lord of waters, has the fishes and the great mammals of the deep on his side of the common frontier. Luvah has the birds of the air. Those like the eagle that eyes the blazing sun, the lark that carols his praises high in rarefied air, are the affections that upsoar and become instinct with celestial intelligence; the night-ingale stands for the essential affections, that voice themselves in ecstatic song; the dove that coos monotonously sweet in woodland sense, suggests the affections so helpless, so foolish, so tender that take refuge in instinct; the tame fowl of the barnyard are affections that have been perversely taught to abandon the air, their natural element to live on refuse and offal, smacking of the mere bodily energy; affections that have degenerated into lusts, nor have even the glory of lust, which, as in lion and tiger, is defiance of limitation, mighty assertion of savage self-dependence. As for the bat, a thing of earth, yet claiming to fly, it might serve to render ghastly clear the lust of mere body that pretends to be an affection, but flits about only in the dusk, when the sun of conscious intelligence has forsaken the east, the zenith, toward the

south, and is speeding into the earth's shadow, the midnight at the nadir, the froze north.

One need only add that the colors have also been divided by Blake among his myth-children. Green and pink are the colors of life; respectively vegetable life, instincts; and human life, imaginative and spiritually minded. Red and yellow, the colors of fire and of warm sunshine, seem to be respectively Orc's and Luvah's, passions and loves. Blue, nearest to darkness of all colors, that of the sky, the illusion that seems to shut us in as denizens of a pitiful world,¹ veiling the face of the universe and its God, belongs to Urthona. White and black, which are not colors at all, are significant of abnormal states of the soul; respectively the intellect that admits no place to love, that lives in the arctic snows, at war with Luvah; and the intellect that loses its intuitive light in the materialism of the sense-life, Urizen at war with Urthona. The color of Urizen redeemed is the golden blaze of the sun, both vivid light and heat.

What could not even you and I write in terms of such a magnificent earth-swallowing hieroglyphic alphabet? What a superb freedom of utterance? What hues of meaning—for which no words do, or ever will exist—cannot be subtly insinuated, so that the myth should defy a rendering altogether into the rigidly abstract, unpoetic, unpictorial dialect of psychology and metaphysic!

What are the chief doctrines of Blake? They are readily inferred. But were it not better in an article meant to stimulate curiosity rather than to satisfy, if we said little of a definite sort about Blake's message? Let us give, however, one obvious caution to the student-reader. Do not expect Blake, or anyone, to utter his whole message at once or to keep it before you entire at any moment. One thing at a time, said with all his might; another on another occasion

¹ Hence his saying "the sky is Satan," and that he had "touched the sky with his stick at the end of a lane."

with equal stress of enthusiasm. Each in its turn emphasized by isolation. So all he says must go together. You will often be perplexed by paradox. It is that the truth lies unutterable, save by symbol between half-truths. Every thinker, in the dearth of words, has to give peculiar meanings to familiar phrases.¹ Only by thinking his thought, do we come to understand his terminology. Blake's is at all events calculated to stir the imagination, even if its precise intelligible value have not been revealed to you. It never impresses you as a mere cryptic alphabet, because it is always in some manner suggestive, making a primary appeal to the inner senses. There is his advantage over other prophets, unpoetic and unpictorial. Only, it were surely a pity to rest content with this superficial sense. For the fullest possible enjoyment of Blake one must at least imaginatively (for the nonce) accept his philosophy.

But why is it so difficult to ascertain Blake's meaning? Why such opposite interpretations? Because, as in the case, for instance, of Christian theology, he was wont to assume attitudes in appearance mutually exclusive. "It must be remembered," says Mr. Swinburne, "that Blake uses the current terms of religion, now as types of his own peculiar faith, and now in the sense of ordinary preachers: impugning therefore at one time what at another he will seem to vindicate."² But it were fair also to add that Blake was firmly convinced that "his own peculiar faith" *was* the real significance of what the "ordinary preachers" grossly misunderstood. Therefore he felt justified in calling himself a Christian, and justified in being bitterly hostile to the current theology. Having to reckon with the usual corruptions (as he deemed them) of doctrines he as surely deemed divine, Blake felt bound to uphold and tear down; and it was

¹ Cf. James Thompson, quoted by W. M. Rossetti, in his *Memoir of Blake*, pp. cxviii-cxix.

² Swinburne, *loc. cit.*, p. 212. *E. g.*, Denier of the vicarious atonement, he yet says: "The death of Jesus set me free,"—"To Tirzah." W. B. Yeats' edition, p. 84.

not always possible, not really necessary, to state definitely every time in which sense he was using a theological phrase. Sometimes an epithet would make his sense clear. In "creeping Jesus," as Mr. Swinburne long ago pointed out, we see of course, the sort of "Jesus" men have tried to exalt. Blake abhors him. The Jesus that "takes after his mother, the law"—the hybrid conception of Christianity—a religion that declares the law a curse, yet would judge its adherents by it, rather than by holy enthusiasm and inspiration, the test of apostolic days¹—he feels duty-bound to oppose with might and main.

"The vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my vision's greatest enemy."

His Christ is the great vindicator of a natural life who preaches to men to be as lily, as sparrow, as little child, as fruitful tree. Faith in the ideal, and hope of manifesting it in one's final perfection—not self-schooling by a set of laws; forgiveness of sins—not the endless legal or illegal vendetta, which were futile; spontaneous virtue—not artificial righteousness; a life from within outward, seeing that the beginnings be right—not from without inward; the setting of desire on things above—not the dangerous starving and impossible killing of desire; indifference to the letter, when sure of the spirit, to the deed, when sure of the will; the essential unity of man and God—not their everlasting antithesis; the radical goodness therefore (not depravity) of human nature, needing only to draw its sap from its true root to become lovely in appearance; as teacher and demonstrator of such doctrines, as preacher of the sermon on the Mount, and utterer of the great prayer of atonement in the garden of Gethsemane, the Christ was to him the Saviour, and in a peculiar sense "the very God."

"If thou humblest thyself thou humblest Me.
Thou also dwellest in eternity.
Thou art a man. God is no more.
Thine own humanity learn to adore;
For that is My spirit of life."

¹ Cf. *e. g.*, 1 Ep. St. John, iii. 24 and iv. 13.

So said the Father to the would-be humble Jesus; and Blake adds:

"I was standing by when Jesus died.
What *they* called humility, *I* called pride."

For he saw the sublime arrogance of that humility of the Christ, (the humility according to Blake, that Christ would have his disciples learn of him, being humble *as he* was meek and lowly) which professing to be nothing, professes God Himself to be all of him. Blake hated that false humility which is meant (consciously or not) only to bid God and man heap on us praises which we eagerly want, and pretend not to claim only in order to obtain more plentifully from less zealous hands!¹

How wonderfully Blake did preach! In an article, however, like this, without illustrations, or space for plentiful quotation, his clearest teaching can hardly be indicated.

Vast stalks of wheat droop pitifully, heavy for very fullness of ear, in a graceful S-like curve; two naked women, their backs turned to us, with a fury of motion, daughters of whirlwind, within the loop of the vast stalks, leaping on air, blow out of spiral trumpets great blasts of foul blight, which settle about the pendant ears and descend in a liberal fall, hesitant, clinging, defiling, like flakes of pitchy snow.

Can you not understand? The fruit-yielding instincts of humanity, no more erect, snaky in curve because of the hurricane of ill-pent passion, rendered foul and barren by imputations of their inherent sinfulness, that cling to ear and stalk till both rot into the ground!

An old man—hoary hair driven flame-like over his forehead, garments fluttering forward, knees barely able to resist the fury of the wind behind—who peers into the gloom of a vault through a door ajar, fain to take refuge from the storm-black sky, lit only now by lurid cloud-edges; yet afraid of the unexplored mystery, and leaning still, as best

¹ Cf. Whitman's doctrine of "divine pride" necessary to democracy, and to the highest religion.

he can, on some old staff of tradition. But above, unseen of him, out of the vault, bursting the mason's work, branches a stout tree, with all its suggestions of perpetual self-renewal, birds that build nests of love, and sing the glories of the risen sun !

How clear again. Life out of death—nay death, only life ; nor in a sense other—for is not the tree, that has its roots in the grave, like any tree ? And further, the reason, a dotard, (because he has not sought the beatific vision that constitutes life eternal), may enter the tomb of materialism, but be sure the instincts will spring the arch, and get into the perfect day.

Another illumined page shadows vividly the gruesome condition, at present, of the soul. Around the engraved text, calm below, wind-roughened above, is sea. Below lies outstretched the pitiful corpse of a youth, and snakes wind about the abandoned limbs, and voracious hyenas of the deep grin at it ready to devour. Above, on a rock of the beaten shore, lies a maiden ; head and hair and arms hanging lifeless backward ; one shining leg still kissed by the salt crests ; her breasts lifted shamelessly, poor corpse, appealing to Heaven for pity, while an eagle, with vast sweep of wings to prevent Heaven's eyes filling with tears at the sight, rends greedily with terrible beak her loins.

How suggestive ! The intellect, lost in the physical, devoured by lusts that wriggle and writhe on their livid bellies, as they emerge from ooze and slime ; and by instincts, ideally intended to obey it, but now masters of it, and its mortal foes. The affections, also dead, resting on the vital-energy, where the instincts agitated by their own unruly elements war with them torn by the sublimest of all, the eagle-affection for the divine, that should be soaring aloft in the heaven of divine imagination. But the intellect is not there, Jove-like to receive the bird, and therefore it descends to lacerate and glut itself on the dead affections themselves. Prostituted intellect, and religious fanaticism batten on the heart ! What a terrible two-fold doom !

Father and daughter embracing—white flowing locks that mingle with golden—both, as it were, released from a prison, and being upcaught to heaven in a luminous cloud, enraptured by their reunion of perfect love. That is it. Let not head find fault with heart, nor heart with head. Let them embrace. Let each resume its function. All will be then forgotten ; all will be well with both.

A ram asleep ; two naked children, one lying beside it, her face hid in the short grass ; the other leaning over the ram, his cheek making a pillow for noon-sleep of its white fleece, shadowed only by his golden hair ; over them droops a tree as a weeping willow of the churchyard, not for shadow but for grace ; in its branches, birds.

If ever a symbol of sorrow, the tree is that no more. It is the sweet melancholy of perfect drowsihead ; and on the branches sit birds singing, to show that what instinctive sadness the pure have, is only a nest-home and song-home for the joys of love and aspiration. Reborn by their mutual forgiveness it is as if old father and daughter had become little children once more. For them, body and sense are pure. In their unconsciousness of self, which is sleep, they confidently lay their heads on dewy grass and woolly ram—and all the while in their dreams the song of their purified being thrills and throbs under the inflow of the divine light and heat that comes to them in their “ wise passiveness.” Intellect and affections do not have to toil and spin. They have no anxieties. They are—that is enough. God is. That is their bliss.

Let us take one more illustrated page.

Below, the dragon-snake twists along at furious rate ; his great wise head with long heedful ears turned rearward, his eyes looking back to see if his precious freight be safe. Above, a bank of peerless cloud floats, with the new moon and one star. Riding the dragon-snake are a maiden and two children. High above, in the region over the clouds, flies a swan with straining neck and furious sweep of pinion, bestridden by a youth who—between the wings, under his hair, flying in the

wind, that seem to beckon as it were to all that is behind to follow—looks back into the traversed spaces.

What should this signify, if not the intellect on the wings of inspiration; affections, instinct, sense, and bodily energy, creeping along in the actual world; both, however, bent for the same goal if by different ways and means; the harmonious operation of the king and the kingdom of man towards the hastening of the "one divine event."

How do I know this is what these illumined pages actually signify? It is what they signify to me. Other meanings besides they doubtless have. These are at all events such meanings as they have for one who has come to know the main tenets of Blake. For the deeper student they will have more. Blake himself had to study his work as we, and often no doubt interpreted it with difficulty. We have this on his own admission. He trusted in the law of correspondence; "three-fold vision" was usual, "fourfold" not uncommon.

For double the vision my eyes do see,
And a double vision is always with me.
(With my inward eye, 'tis an old man grey;
With my outward a thistle across the way.)

Now I a four-fold vision see,
And a four-fold vision is given to me,
'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight,
And three-fold in soft Beulah's night,
And two-fold always. May god us keep
From single vision, and Newton's sleep! ¹

A three-fold sense to his symbols there usually is—one on the plane of human social intercourse, one on the plane of psychology, one on the universal, because as man so the Kosmos. On the divine plane, no doubt, at times there are senses of his myths, glimpsed in utmost glory of his "supreme delight" which eluded even Blake himself. That is the penalty we pay for inspiration. We build better than we *know*. Let us also trust the law of correspondence (law, or theory, or working hypothesis, or poetic fancy—be

¹ "Los, the Terrible," pp. 136-138, W. B. Yeats' edition.

it what you please to call it!) Which is simply the thought of order and symmetry of structure in the all. All that is, has organic unity; analogies are therefore to be expected; not similarities of beings, and facts, but of the relations of these. If all this be not so in "reality" (as we say,) it is at all events a sublime poetic dream; and as we would it were indeed realized in actuality (who could help but "wish it true!") let us give Blake love and honor, then, for having realized it in art.

Having hinted at his message through hazarded interpretations of six pages of his prophetic books, let us close this paper with an attempt at interpreting one of the most accessible but difficult poems of Blake. I shall do this merely with the intention of furnishing an example of the method of procedure, not pretending to give an instance of its indisputable success.

The Songs of Experience begin with some manifestly difficult stanzas. I shall furnish the reader with glosses which he is earnestly requested to treat as no part of the authoritative text! Never make Moses responsible for the calculations of an Usher, orthodox arch-bishop though he be, and Irish ecclesiastic to boot!

Hear the voice of the Bard,
Who present, past, and future, sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walked among the ancient trees;
Calling the lapsed soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control the starry pole,
And fallen, fallen light renew!

The Bard (=inspired poet) addresses the earth; not the planet, but collective humanity symbolized by the planet. The bard has the intellect open: he *sees* not only the present, but the past, not only the past but the future; for he understands the cyclic law of development, and apprehends every condition and event in the light of cause and consequence; his *ears*(=sense signifying the life energy of the

bodily man) have received the message of that Divine One that is wont to pervade (in the days of human innocence) the instincts and even the sensual life of man ; and who calls now through the bard to the “lapsed soul,” which might, if it chose, be master of the flesh (= starry pole—the nadir) and rejoice anew in the old light of inspired intellect. The bard cries his message, infected instinctively (=the dew) with grief (=weeping) because in sympathy he realizes as his own the woeful obscuration of the intellect(=evening) in the “lapsed soul,” of whom he desires to speak to mankind (=the Earth).

O Earth, O Earth, return !
 Arise from out the dewy grass !
 Night is worn,
 And the morn
 Rises from the slumberous mass.
 Turn away no more ;
 Why wilt thou turn away ?
 The starry floor,
 The watery shore,
 Is given thee till the break of day !

The dominion of the flesh (=night) is all but over ; from the carnal man, dormant in instincts (=dewy grass), the intellect (=the sun) is about to burst forth to sovereign inspiration (=the zenith) through the free affections (=East) ;¹ till when thou art given, O mankind. thy wholesome bodily energies (=the starry floor, *i. e.*, the sky that is floor of the spiritual temple) and thy yet pure instincts where they border on, and batter against the flesh, perpetually eroding it (=the watery shore) as trustworthy requiring no reform, and indicating by that which they need to complement them, what the affections and intellect should be, and shall become when the hour of thy illumination has struck (=the break of day).

Let the reader proceed to try the general indications given in this paper (and largely borrowed from Messrs. Ellis and

¹ N. B. the morn=the sun, rising in the east, and mounting toward the zenith.

Yeats, who should not, however, be held responsible for any degree of wilful or inevitable misapprehension of their meaning by the present writer) upon such easy poems as the Little Black Boy, or the Little Girl Lost and the Little Girl Found; then upon the poems contained in Mr. Yeats' beautiful edition; then let him attempt "Thel," and the Prophetic Books.

Now, in conclusion, let me say that the best theory of Blake's system of symbology is that which can deal most successfully without violence, with the greatest number of difficulties. If it be true, as Dr. Garnett would have us think, that Messrs. Ellis and Yeats' labors have been all but in vain,¹ we can only say: "So much the worse for Blake!" For my part I find Dr. Garnett's own account unsatisfactory in the extreme. He thinks Blake did not talk "aimless nonsense *exactly*" (something very near it, though the Doctor seems to imply!; for all there is to be conscious of in his works is "a *general* drift of thought in some *particular* direction which seems to us to offer a *general* affinity to the thought of the Gnostics." Since, however, the doctrine of the Gnostics (as to its intention) is all but unknown; read of mainly in the distortions of hostile refutations; we may judge of the helpful lucidity of Dr. Garnett's suggestion! His criticism of Messrs. Ellis and Yeats' interpretation of Thel is to say the very least captious.

"In understanding Blake's myth, the first thing is to read him through."² The second qualification is to be thoroughly in sympathy with Blake's general view—to have mastered by sympathetic study the literature that influenced him. Few of Blake's critics have really shown that they had these two prerequisites for successful independent interpretation. While I myself cannot honestly claim either (for surely "reading him through" means something like

¹ A pity that Mr. Story (Essay, p. 158,) who can himself so little interpret as a whole Blake's writings should feel obliged to reject Messrs. Ellis and Yeats' expository methods!

² E. and Y. Works of Blake. Vol. i., p. 336.

“thorough reading”—and “thorough” is an exacting word) I shall hold on to the skirts of the editors who have so valiantly vindicated Blake and given us, from inchoate manuscripts, that incomparable Book of Vala (“which they fondly deem to be now in proper order”)¹—could anyone have read it and not fondly hoped the editor’s fond deeming to be just?—of which let the one who would approach the Prophetic Books try the ninth “night” entitled the “Last Judgment,” and if it does not raise in him a great tide of enthusiasm (solar or lunar, who cares?) he can safely conclude, I fancy, that for him the poetry of mysticism—poetry that is rhythmic, poetic and pictorial, and yet surcharged with spiritual energy has no attractions.

With a quotation from it let us end our lucubrations, preparatory we trust, to solid studies.

“If gods combine against *Man*, setting their dominion above
The Human Form Divine,² thrown down from their high station.
In the eternal heavens of Human Imagination, buried beneath
In dark oblivion, with incessant pangs, ages on ages,
In enmity and war first weakened, then in stern repentance.
They must renew their brightness, and their disorganized functions
Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human,
Coöperating in the bliss of many obeying his will,
Servants to the infinite and eternal of the Human Form.”

Such does Blake declare, he, the prophet of the “Poetic Genius,” to be the final judgment on all religious ideals, dogmas, gods. If they proceed to be enforced for their own sake, are exaggerated for the purpose of making them “strong,” they will be cast out by the spiritual imagination of the race, forgotten, till they lose their absoluteness, appeal humbly for a hearing, urged only for the sake of what they can contribute to man’s blissful growth towards that type of manhood, “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”¹ which is what man, when he under-

¹ Wm. Blake, by Dr. R. G., p. 30.

² Cf. “The Divine Image,” in *Songs of Innocence*. W. B. Yeats’ edition, pp. 54-55, and “The Human Abstract,” in *Songs of Experience*. W. B. Yeats’ edition, p. 78.

stands his thought, discovers that he really means all along by "God."

After the superb unrolling of dooms, which are restorations, the Book of Vala ends with the noble prophecy.²

"Dark religions are departed, and sweet science reigns!"

The science of God, to be sure, not the prostration to a man-made mystery, called mystery because of its incredible senselessness, masked by false reverence:

The good of the land is before you, for mystery is no more.³

The science of God, as the goal of human evolution; viz: to know God as one with man, as identical with the eternal man; whom we become day by day if we grow at all, whom to worship is equivalent to hatred for all things unmanly and therefore also ungodly; such was the final vision of the prophet, who passed into the unseen on a chariot of fiery songs in praise of his Maker, in the seventieth year of Swedenborg's New Age, and the 1827th of our Era.

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

² Book of Vala. Night ii. ll. 361-370.

³ Cf. Book of Vala. Night ix, ll. 650-676.